

BeyondParentalAlienation Blog

Dr. Steven G. Miller: Fundamental Attribution Error

by James | Blog | 11 comments



Dr. Steven G. Miller's video, "Why Courts Fail to Recognize Parental Alienation" wasn't something I was aware of until only a few days ago. Dr. Steven Miller's insights on this dynamic are spot on, to say the least. For those of you who haven't seen it, check it out at the bottom of this post. This is the 7 1/2 minute version but there is also a full 41 minute version.

One part of his testimony really stood out for me. This is where he described the need for people to be specially trained in knowing what to look for when determining if alienation is occurring. Otherwise, as he describes it, it is easy to make a "fundamental attribution error".

I had a different way of describing it, but I am sure most of you will know what it is the moment you see it. I noticed that the therapists in my case who were willing to look at a larger scope of behavior on the part of myself, my ex, and our child, started to get a clearer picture of what was going on. The ones who looked at only one part of the puzzle (either my ex or our child or the two of them without much if any input from me) were the ones who saw me as the problem. For example, the CPS case worker's supervisor told me after their investigation (see "The End Run Nuclear Option") that they reported my ex and our child demonstrated a warm and loving bond. I knew it was BS but until I saw Dr. Miller's video I didn't have a phrase for it.

What is the Fundamental Attribution Error?

According to Dr. Steven Miller, the fundamental attribution error occurs when an untrained therapist makes very broad assumptions based on very limited exposure to the parents in a high conflict custody situation.

Most alienators (especially the more severe kind) are very good at mimicking social cues that get people to sympathize with them. They come off as cool, calm, and collected. The targeted parent, who hasn't had much, if any contact with their child or children for an extended period of time is experiencing stress on the level of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder—like what some war veterans experience). He or she tends to come off as more anxious.

The attribution error comes in when the therapist (or judge or social worker) sees this and assumes that because they are behaving like that in that instance, it must mean that's how they parent. The short answer is, NO. It does not mean this. Unless the therapist is trained to look at other dynamics like enmeshment between the favored parent and the child they mistakenly think the targeted parent is the problem. The targeted parent should definitely be getting some help (see "Coping Strategies Part 1" and "Coping Strategies Part 2" for some tips) but this does not mean they are engaged in the destructive behaviors the alienating parent is engaged in.

I think that getting the word about this single point could be very effective in and of itself to making therapists and others who deal with high conflict situations to widen their scope of consideration to get a potentially fuller and more accurate take on what is going on.

I have been e-mailing the link to the shorter video below to therapists, state legislative offices, and will continue to do so. As I explore this further I'll keep you posted. Any thoughts or things you've been doing to spread this idea are welcome!

Why Courts Fail to Recognize Parental Alienation Video

Why Courts Fail to Recognize Parental Alienation

Watch on [YouTube](#)

[Video Link](#)

[Web site to find out more about Dr. Miller](#)

11 Comments

- Christine Mireles** on November 2, 2017 at 6:19 am

Great article can i send you the family court that needs to have this sent to? I have been the target for the last 2 1/2 yrs since ive seen or spoken to my now 13yr old son.

[Reply](#)
- James** on November 3, 2017 at 3:19 am

Sure, but is there a reason you can't send it?

[Reply](#)
- Paul H Garner** on September 17, 2018 at 4:23 am

How do I directly contact Dr. Steve Miller?

[Reply](#)
- James** on September 18, 2018 at 2:43 am

Hi Paul
I am unsure. If anyone reading this knows please share!

[Reply](#)
- Fernando** on July 12, 2021 at 1:54 am

Same question here. Contact info please if you have came across it yet

[Reply](#)
- James** on December 2, 2021 at 6:25 pm

Dr. Miller is a bit hard to track down. Here's a link to a talk of his on YouTube. Maybe ask around there as well.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z675aYGHV4>

[Reply](#)
- Suz** on November 3, 2017 at 11:50 pm

Christine, are you asking for someone else to send this article to the family court on your behalf? From what you're saying it seems like you feel the court won't take you seriously because you've been trying to get through for 2-1/2 years. Is that correct?

[Reply](#)
- Jill** on September 21, 2020 at 8:45 pm

Accepted invitation to yesterday's information, Dr Steve Miller presented, in regards to PAS in court Hearings. I spent the last 4 yrs doing Extensive research on PAS! The info he presented, I was able to follow, only because, I love my son, and will Not give up! I give every waking moment to research! Otherwise I would not be able to follow. Out of desperation, and necessity due to the peril my child (victim) is in, I need to know how to reach him. I have tried the blog but don't get anywhere.

[Reply](#)
- James** on September 25, 2020 at 8:39 am

I can tell you there are plenty of good resources here and the related groups. I was able to reverse my situation without ever speaking to him. (His info is fantastic but from what I understand he's not easy to reach.)

[Reply](#)
- Jill** on September 21, 2020 at 8:59 pm

Pathological enmeshment, the alienating parent has an unhealthy enmeshment, w/the child , to the point where the child has lost his or her individuality! (This is what is happening w/my child) Pathological enmeshment is a problem! (Chilling, this is what has happened to my child!) To a Non expert, looks exactly like a close warm relationship. . Help!

[Reply](#)
- James** on September 25, 2020 at 8:36 am

Welcome to the community.
Please feel free to email me.
james@beyondparentalalienation.com I'm sure I can direct you to good info and perhaps some people who can help.

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